

Appl. No. : 10/829,631
Filed : April 22, 2004

AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION

Please amend the following paragraphs as follows:

[0001] This application is a continuation of U.S. Application No. 10/266,040, filed ~~October 7, 2002, which October 7, 2005, now U.S. Patent No. 6,820,669, issued November 23, 2004, which is incorporated herein by reference for all that it discloses.~~

[0039] As shown in **FIGURE 6**, the wheel 60 includes an integral aesthetic design on its outboard face 62 64. The design preferably extends from the central hub 62 into and across at least a portion of the outer flange 66. The design on the outer flange 72 preferably includes a pattern of surface variations comprising a plurality of at least one of either indentations 76, protrusions 78, or slits 80 that are aesthetically consistent with and blend into the design of the central hub 62. As used herein, the term “slits” encompasses grooves formed on a surface whether or not such grooves pass through the surface. In the illustrated embodiment, the integral design creates the appearance that the spokes formed on the central hub 62 extend into the outer flange 66, making it more difficult to perceive upon casual inspection where the central hub 62 ends and the outer flange 66 begins. Indeed, the consistency and blending of the designs on the central hub 62 and outer flange 66 make it unlikely that the casual observer of a mounted wheel 60 would notice that the outer flange 66 extends beyond the wheel barrel 70.

[0049] In the illustrated embodiment, the outer radial location of the wheel protector 102 (i.e., the distance from the inner diameter d_i of the tire to the diameter d_p of the wheel protector 102) is about the same or slightly greater than the 2-1/2-inch-wide outer flange 66 of the wheel 60. As previously explained, those of skill in the art will appreciate after reading this disclosure that the outer flange 66 may have many other widths, including 1 inch, 1-1/2 inches, 2 inches, or 2-1/2 inches. Thus, the outer radial location of the wheel protector 102 would also have corresponding sizes of about 1 inch, 1-1/2 inches, 2 inches, or 2-1/2 inches to approximately match the size of the outer flange 66. The region between the inner diameter d_i of the tire wall 92 and the diameter d_L of the ledge 108 is the flange seat 109. The width W_{fs} of the flange seat 109 is preferably at least about one-quarter of the width of the outboard tire wall 92 (as measured along the tire wall 92 from the inner diameter d_i to the outer tire diameter d_t where the tread 98 begins) and can, for example, be at least about 1 inch, 1-1/2 inches, 2 inches, or 2-1/2 inches to generally match the inboard face 74 of the outboard flange, as explained below.

Appl. No. : 10/829,631
Filed : April 22, 2004

As illustrated and described above, the outer radial location of the wheel protector 102 can be slightly greater than the width of the outer flange 66 because the distance from the inner diameter d_i of the tire to the diameter d_p of the wheel protector 102 includes the width W_{fs} of the flange seat 109 plus the width of the wheel protector 102 (i.e., the radial distance between d_L and d_p). More preferably, the width W_{fs} of the flange seat 108 is at least about one-third, and most preferably at least about one-half, of the width of the outboard tire wall 92. Many other sizes within and beyond these ranges and examples are encompassed by the present invention. If the flange seat 109 and outer flange 66 do not extend radially far enough, the desired simulation is less effective. If they extend too far, the vehicle to which the mounted wheel is attached would undesirably appear to be riding on its wheels with little or no tire visible.